Oxford

STOCK No 752

MADE IN U. S. A.

NICE TREE YOU'VE GOT THERE

A One-Act, by Chiang au Malley.

RONNIE, a youngster of eleven.
MILTON, a young man of twenty-one.
WALLACE, Ronnie's father.

(As we open, Ronnie stands by a scrub pine, fidgeting. He wears hiking boots, a noncommitally mottoed Tshirt and shorts. And glasses. Milton comes on, at the opposite side of the stage. He comes to Ronnie, who is clearly monopolizing the shade.)

Milton. Is it cool under there? I hope.
Ronnie. I'm waiting for my father.
Milton. Need help?
Ronnie. There isn't really room for us both under here.
Milton. Oh, it looks like a pretty big tree to me.
R. Well, we'll both have to stand halfway in the sun if you try to come
m under here.
M. The way I figure it is that we might both stay cool.
R. No, I think you'd push me part way into the sun. And I'm little and very prone to sunstroke.
M. Frankly, I don't think the sun is going to do me much harm. I'll sit here and be my own shade. I better enjoy nature to the utmost while I get the chance.
R. Did you see my father? He was behind you on the trail.
M. He might well be down there.I was whistling a lot, you see. That way you tend to miss things.
R. You do know what my father looks like, don't you?
M. Got a pretty good idea. About regular size with a pink face and a big smile.
R. You sure you didn't see him down below?
M. I wasn't really looking around. I even forgot to look at the waterfall until I was practically under it.
R. Because I'm afraid something might have happened to him. I don't know why he has to walk so slowly.
M. You heard him tell Mr. Fisher that he wanted to take it nice and slow and enjoy the scenery. It seems to me that your father is out of condition.
R. But something could have happened.
M. Probably not.
R. How do you know?
M

M. I don't.
R. Then why ar you so sure.
M. Jiggety sakes, lad, relax. Calm down. Yawn maybe. You are always worrying. Next you will worry about the sun not coming up in the morning.
R. But I'm worried--
M. Oh-oh-- maybe I oughtn't to have put it into--
R. Anything--
M. Your head.
R. Anything--
M. Could be the war might start--
R. Anything could have happened--
M. So what, so what, so what, so what.
R. Gosh darn it, you bums are always telling me there's nothing to worry about. Maybe something's happened to my father.
M. NOW LOOK HERE, youngster. Are we friends or aren't we?
R. Who said you were my friend?
M. Nobody else is. That leaves me.
R. Maybe a rock fell on him.
M. Think about waterfalls. Did you know that in Nevada there exists a six-hundred foot waterfall that disgorges thirty gallons of pure grapefruit juice a minute, and it hasn't been developed yet? Just awaits the touch of some talented investor to fulfill its burgeoning promise--
R. There's no grapefruit juice waterfall.
M. W ell, maybe not in Nevada.
R. Not anywhere, I bet.
M. They're discovering new things every day. Howx can you say with certainty that someday we won't find them? Maybe even make them.
R. Not grapefruit juice. Maybe colored water.
M. Funny you shbuld speak of that. I was just thinking wh@ fun it would be to throw a surplus Navy dye marker into the falls when we get to the top. Wouldn't it be fun to muck up nature's glory with crummy pastels, just for a little bit?
R. Do you have a dye marker?
M. The beauty is to think about it. Gentian, turmeric, cochineal-- all those lovely colors, cascading over the rocks--
R. There he is! I see my father!
M. Hot damn. Told you. See, kid? Fear not, you are a lambkin of the Lord.
R. He's walking awfully slowly, though.
M. Why the dickens did you ever join the boy scouts?
R. My father wanted me to.
M. That's the worst reason I've heard this week. Do you like being in the boy scouts?
R. I just hate it. How much farther is it to the top? I hate all this walking. I'm so tired already. It looks so far. Is it true there's a ~~ladder~~ ladder behind the falls that you have to climb?
M. Who said that?
R. Mr. Fisher.
M. Wasn't it Mr. Fisher told you there were whales in the creek by the camp?
R. Well, I didn't know. How am I supposed to know he was lying?
M. He wasn't actually lying.
R. Well, he knew it wasn't the truth.
M. Do you like poetry?
R. I don't know.
M. Well, poetry is like that. It isn't true, but it's worthwhile. That is, as poetry. If then. No other way, certainly.

R Hey, Milt!
M. Yowzuh.
R. D o you like being in the boy scouts?
M, I am not in the boy scouts. I am twenty-one years old. I am far too old to be a boy scout.
R. How come you came on the hike, then?
M. I came on the hike because my brother is onm the hike, and I came up here to drive him home.
R. Hmm Well, how come you aren't walking with him, then?
M. I thought I'd talk with you merely. I can talk to him the rest of the time.
R. Why do you want to talk to me?
M. How should I know?
R. Well, I just wondered. Don't get mad.
M. Way it works is this. When I saw you and Goppo Reagan fighting back there, I said to myself, I will talk to Ronnie.
R. Are you going to bawl me out?
M. Certainly not, I think you did right.
R. Well, he was kicking dust in my face, and I told him to stop, and then he hit me.
M. I understand perfectly. I didn't see the fight, mind, till after it was all started. I'm sorry I missed the beginning.
R. Then everybody started yelling at me. They always yell at me.
M. That's quite true. That's perfectly true. I watched that part closely.
R. They always pick on me.
M. Remember, anybody would have yelled at you for throwing stones at Goppo.
R. But he was bigger than me. And besides, he was uphill.
M. I quite xxxxx In honestly don't think thag Goppo is bigger than you.
R. Well, he's two months older.
M. I 's very funny. I was in exactly your position some nine or ten years ago, hen I was your age. Everybody picked on me. That was just a awful. I remember one fight where I threw rocks, too.
R. Was the other kid older too?
M. I don't know about that, but I'll tell you it was bad. Worst part was it was in front of girls.
R. Did you win?
M. Are you kidding? With rocks? I got smashed.
R How come?
M. I'm not sure exactly. But it always works out that way somehow.
R. Did you hate the boy scouts?
M. I just told you I was never in the boy scouts. That was another funny thing among many in my life. I saw this movie about boy scouts when I was too youhg to join, and I got all excited and boy I wanted to be a boy scout. Then I found out what kind of guys were in the boy scouts and I rather changed my mind.
R. What kind of guys?
M. You know. Big tough kids.
R. Were they like they are now?
M. Just like. Big and tough.
R. They're always fighting, and they swear a lot.
M. Exactly.
R. They're all bigger than me. Actually I joined the scouts at an illegal age when I was to young, but Dad persuaded Mr. Fisher to let me into the troop. I hate it!
M. You know something. I don't think you ought to be in the boy scouts.
R. You don't?
M. Certainly not. It's supposed to be fun. If you don't like it, well...!
R. My Dad wants me to be in it. I'd rather stay home and swim in the pool

next door.
M. I haven't finished telling you my story.
R. What story?
M. About wha I did. When I didn't join the boy scouts.
R. First they told me to get out of the scouts, so I did, and then they were all telling me to get back in again, so I did, and now they all want me out again.
M. So anyway, there I was. You know, that's how it goes. I didn't like the big tough kids, and I only had like maybe one or two friends all along-- I really got along terribly in school, so you know what I did?
R. What?
M. I stayed home and read books. Dom you like to read books?
R. My Dad wants me to read Swiss Family Robinson.
M. That's a fine book. I think that would be a very fine book for you to read.
R. What would you do if you were me?
M. I'd go home and read a book. You're not the boy scout type. You're the bookish type.
R. Do you really think so?
M. Absolutely. I tell you true, Ronnie. Quit the boy scouts and go home and quit worrying. That is my advice to you. Especially the quit worrying. Why should you sit around and getm picked on all the time like this?
R. My Dad wouldn't want me to quit.
M. So you don't want to stay. As it happens, you're right and he's wrong. Most likely.
R. What makes you think I'm the bookish type?
M. You have that set to your jaw. That slump to your shoulders. Mainly I think it's the glasses. Take off your glasses. Yeah. It's the glasses. But it's a start. Yeah, you could be the bookish type. I really think you should stay home and read books and just make the friends you like.
R. My Dad wouldn't like me to quit.
M. That's the hard part, I agree. What does your mother say?
R. She usually says, whatever your father wants.
M. Your mother isn't the pushy type?
R. No.
M. That's interesting.
R. Why?
M. But maybe you could get her on your side.
R. My Dad is walking awfully slowly.
M. He's just taking his time. Hey! Wallace!
W. (Off.) Hello there.
M. How're you doing?
W. (Off.) Just taking my time.
Mx. See you shortly.
W. (Off.) Right-o.
R. Hey, Dad?
W. (Off.) Hi, son.
R. Are you all right?
W. /Just fine.
R. (Off.) I was afraid something might have happened.
W. Quit that worrying, boy, and have a good time for a change.
R. Hey, you took my tree.
M. You weren't using it.
R. I want it back. It's hot out.
M. So it is. Well, join me in the shade.
R. There's not room for two.
M. Suffer a bit. Let your shoulder stick out into the sun.
R. Give it back.
~~M. All right, all right.~~
~~R. How come you don't mind talking to me?~~

M. All right, all right.
R. How come you don't mind talking to me?
M. I don't know. I like you or something.
R. Do you really like me?
M. Of course I do, dammit!
R. Better than the other guys?
M. As a matter of fact, yes.
R. Why?
M. That's a stick question. Because you're so much like me. Actually, you're just like the way I used to be.
R. What happened?
M. In what way?
R. To make you like you are now.
M. Well, actually, a lot of things. Now sit downs and listen. I'm trying to give you advice. For one thing you should junk this whole boy scout venture. Forget about these guys and don't worry about finding friends and you will.
R. I don't need friends.
M. We'll get to that. Next you should read some good books. That is, come to think of it, you should just read the books you like. Readn any book so long as you like it. Don't waste your time. Life is short.
R. Hi, Dad!
W. (Entering.) Boy, this is some climb! You know you're a man when you've finished this course.
R. I was worried about you.
W. Quit worrying and catch up with the other boys.
R. I was talking to Milt. I've been thinking it over and I want to leave the boy scouts.
M. Now, Ronnie--
W. Son, what a whacky idea! Here you are nearly Seconds Class, and you want to quit just because the hill is steep.
R. No, Dad. I hate the boy scouts and I hate the jobs we have to do and I hate the jobs we have to do and I hate the other guys and I hate camping out. Milt says he wouldn't do it if he were me.
W. Was Ronnie bothering you? This kid asks the darndest questions, always runningx around you in circles.
M. Doesn't bother me a bit. I enjoy talking to him.
W. Well, that's your funeral. Now listen, I don't know where you've got this idea of quitting the scouts, but we'll talk about it when we get home, all right? See what your Mother says. We'll see what she thinks about your being a quitter in the middle of the game.
M. You know, I think he has a point or two in his favor, Wallace--
W. Oh, he just gets these ideas in his head all the time. Doesn't mean a thing. Now, did you take any new pictures, son?
R. No. Should I take a picture of the canyon, Dad? (Gesture at audience.)
W. We've already got one, son. Save if for things we haven't got.
R. Will you tell me when to take one?
W. Why can't you learn to do these things on your own, boy? What do you think of this hill, Milton? Really some climb, huh?
M. Boy, isn't it.
Wm. Well, I'll just keep walking on at my own speed. If you don't want to go ahead of me, that makes you the hind end of the troop.
M. Okay with me. I like to take my time too.
R. Dad, I don't think I'm the right type for the boy scouts. I'm not the boy scout type. I think I'm more the bookish type.

M. The bookish type?
R. Meah, Dad. I think I'm mofe the bookish type.
W. You are stark, raving bats. Hey, Milton, does he look like the bookish type? Now be candid.
M. As a matter of fact, he does.
W. Whoop! I said be candid, but not that candid. Well, son, you can grow up to be any type you like. Or you can please your Daddy and not be any type at all. Well, I'll walk along now. You better come with me. Sorry if he's been bothering you, Milton.
M. Not slightly, Wallace. Matter of fact, I'd be happy if he stayed and talked with me a bit longer.
W. Think you can stand it?
M. Sure.
W. Okay, I'll leave him here with you. Just holler if he gets too pesky. (Exit.)
M. See you at the top, Wallace.
W. (Off.) See you at the top! That's where the lunch is waiting.
M. Nice tree you've got there.
R. You can come under, but I warn you, it'll really be crowded.
M. This is actually a good tree. It looks sort of rum and scrawny but it's basically quite good.
R. What was it like when you were in the boy scouts? Did they pick on you much?
M. I told you I was never in the boy scouts. Quote me right or not at all.
R. You think I should quit the boy scouts?
M. It's up to you, but after thinking I tend to say yes.
R. You really think I should read books. I mean you really think I'm the bookish type.
M. Well, yes, you truly are.
R. I guess I always have sort of liked books.
M. Don't see why you shouldn't.
R. What makes you say I'm the bookish type?
M. Now hold on. Don't take that too straight. When I say you're the type I don't mean that's the way you should act all the time. You can act any way you want.
R. But you think in general I act more bookish.
M. Yes, but recall that's just a habit, so to speak. You don't have to do it all the time. What you should really do is--
R. I ought to catch up with my father, you know? I'd rather walk with my father. Excuse me. (Exit.)
M. (After a pause. Not to the audience. More to the cliffs.) That's the funny think about giving advice.
R. (Returning.) What books do you think I should read?
M. Well, I think I mentioned several. At least I should have. Sherlock Holmes. Oz Books? No, you're too old.
R. Those tough kids read Sherlock Holmes.
M. That's the way of it. Why don't you find some magazine that you and you alone follow, reading every issue? Astounding Science Fiction, or Harper's Magazine. Reader's Digest. With me it was the Reader's Digest, by damn.
R. I don't like to read magazines.
M. You can get an education just from advertisements. Especially old ones.
R. My father was such a short distance I figured I could catch up. He's farther away now. I think I better go now .
M. Say. For crumpy sakes, why don't you get rid of your father once in a while? I bet you'd have a whale of a better time.

while? I bet you'd have a whale of a better time.

R. No. I think for a father and son to be together is one of the finest things in this world, don't you?
M. Yeah. Sure, you're perfectly right.
R. I'll see you later. (Exit.)
M. Now here's the t ing. I realize and understand and submit to the fact that I am in no position to give advice. However, when I give advice, I expect that attention be given it. Actually old Ronnie is practically a textbook case. That detracts not one whit from his worthiness, mind you! No, sir. As a human be ing, banal or extraordinary, he deserves all the--
R. (Reappearing.) How come you talk to yourself?
M. Funny you asked that. Do you talk to yourself?
R. Yes, a lot. I thought it was a bad thing. It's the only way I can figure things out.
M. Ronnie, while we8re on the subject, sit down. There are some post scripts I wanted to get of the shelves.
R. What subject?
M. Great subject of Life. When I give advice, I expe ct attention be paid it. I have some more small advices.
R. I haven't got t me. My father is getting farther away.
M. First about girls. Do you like girls?
R. No.
M. I bet you do but you won't show it because that's just the way I was, so look here-- pay attention-- girls are great. They're really neat. Actually they're sort of scary at first because they make so much noise.
R. Listen, can I talk to you later?
M. And about mistakes. You know how you're always making mistakes and people b bawl you out for it and you feel really bad and stupid for days? There's a secret about that, and the secret is don't let it get you, because you can learn just as well slow as fast, and if you take it easy things may well come out all right in the end...
R. I have to go!
M. You don't really live on the brink of disaster, it just feels...
(RONNIE exits.)
M. There we go. You've done your part. N.R.A. To the millenium! (Makes an imaginary toast, drinks, throws imaginary glass into gorge, which is imaginary.) Thank mummy and thank daddy and protect Uncle Richard from bad business dealings...
R. (Entering.) You want an orange?
M. Thank you. What brought you back?
R. I came to give you an orange. Why aren't you hiking?
M. I am taking my time, thank you.
R. You know, you were right. I really am the bookish type. I remember this one book I read where--
M. On your wayxx. Hike with your father.
R. See you later.
Ml Right.
(Ronnie exits.)
M. I think things would be better if other things were better. Sometimes I feel like a memorable literary character. Maybe I could do this for a living. Or maybe I could have a truck garden.
But think-- talking to youngsters for a living, setting them straight. I wish somebody'd set me straight. I wish, in fact, I knew some people that had been set straight. Actually nothings very straight. (Throws imaginary stone into gorge, exits whistling.)

'Nice Tree You've Got There' Am. Act, 1959 Written in multi-play night?